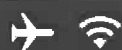
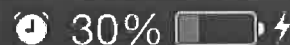


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Op-Ed from the Class of...

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Op-Ed from the Class of 2015

As members of the Class of 2015 at St. Paul's School, we are deeply troubled by the negative statements and misconstrued notions circulating about our school community. We understand that provocative news headlines can make even the most thorough reader jump to conclusions. Having just graduated, though, we would like to share our experiences as St. Paul's students, with the hope of providing an alternative perspective.

St. Paul's is not perfect, nor is it impervious to the problems surrounding hierarchy, relationships, and gender that all high schools face. However, the faculty, students, and administration work constantly to confront these issues and improve St. Paul's culture. During our time at the school, we participated in thought-provoking student meetings, invited guest speakers to challenge our perceptions, and organized student-faculty committees dedicated to examining and bettering our interactions. As students, we created a number of groups focused on opening avenues of meaningful dialogue about gender-related issues. As a result, together we have created a thriving institution that defines itself not by hierarchical structures, but by kindness, diversity, respect, and love.

Last year, when the allegations surfaced about sexual assault, our closely-knit community of 550 students grieved and struggled to comprehend how such a horrific thing could happen on our campus. St. Paul's rallied to be compassionate and support the two students involved, as we knew them as classmates, friends, and integral parts of our SPS family.

Unfortunately, the media have portrayed our school in a very different light, choosing to view slang—much of which is



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dated and rapidly disappearing—as confirmation of an entirely unhealthy relationship culture. Unlike what many news outlets claim, “scoring” is a term that is used to describe any sort of romantic act between two people. While “score” is an unfortunate word to use when referring to relationships, among the student body, it does not imply sexual intercourse, nor any type of competition. The “senior salute” that has been depicted as a male-dominated, insidious “tradition” is in reality the simple act of abandoning your fears and seeking out that person whom you always liked but never had the courage to pursue. Neither of these phrases is specifically gendered: girls, as much as boys, engage in these interactions. Just as importantly, while some might portray these terms as permanent fixtures of St. Paul’s culture, in reality they only arose in the past few years, and are dissolving from student vocabulary just as quickly. Similarly, we would posit that traditions from the 80s and 90s died out long ago, and thus are not relevant to the school culture today. For example, no current student knows what “screw dances” and “newb nights” are, despite alumni who claim otherwise.

Some media sources seek to make a connection between privilege and sexual assault at our school. Those that accuse St. Paul’s of entitlement forget that 40% of our student body, the defendant included, receive financial aid. We have witnessed how our school strives to support diversity in all its forms and works to ensure that its members are treated with the equity and respect that all people—girl or boy, senior or freshman—deserve.

Finally, we’d like to acknowledge that sexual misconduct and the other issues we’ve discussed are problems at both public and private schools, high schools and universities. It is a universal problem that warrants thoughtful discussion, not accusations that characterize these problems as singular to one school.



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